

## 4. RISK FACTORS FOR HEALTH

### Diet and physical activity among adults

A healthy diet is associated with improved health outcomes. Adults who follow a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and low in fat, sugars and salt/sodium are at a lesser risk of developing one or more cardiovascular diseases and certain types of cancer (Graf and Cecchini, 2017[1]). Healthy diet may also reduce the likelihood of being overweight or obese. In 2017, inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption led to an estimated 3.9 million deaths worldwide (Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network, 2018[2]).

On average across OECD countries, over half (57%) of all adults consumed at least one piece of fruit per day in 2017 (Figure 4.8). Values for this metric are highest in Australia, Spain, New Zealand and Italy (greater than 75%). Conversely, Chile, Finland and Latvia recorded values below 40%. In all countries except Spain, women are more likely to consume fruit daily. This gender gap in fruit consumption was largest in Finland and Austria, with over a 20 percentage point difference.

The share of populations consuming vegetables daily was similar: 60% of adults, on average across the OECD. Countries with the highest rate of vegetable consumption are Australia, Korea, New Zealand and the United States, all of which recorded values greater than 90% (Figure 4.9). At the other end of the spectrum, this figure fell below 35% in Germany and the Netherlands. As with fruit consumption, women are more likely than men to eat at least one portion of vegetables per day (65% of women v 54% of men, on average). Daily vegetable consumption was higher among women than men in all countries other than Korea and the United States (where gender differences were minimal).

Physical activity is also important for leading a healthy lifestyle. Regular physical activity is associated with significant benefits such as improved bone and functional health, and reduced risk of various non-communicable diseases and depression (Warburton and Bredin, 2017[3]). Advances in technology in areas such as transport, communication and entertainment have contributed to declines in physical activity (Graf and Cecchini, 2017[1]).

About two in three adults (66%) meet the recommended guidelines for moderate physical activity, on average across 23 OECD countries (Figure 4.10). Adults are most likely to be sufficiently active in Sweden, Iceland, Norway and Denmark (over 75% of adults). Conversely, less than half of the adult population in Italy and Spain engage in the recommended amount of moderate physical activity. Other than Denmark,

men are more likely to be physically active than women in all 23 OECD countries with comparable data.

#### Definition and comparability

Fruit and vegetable consumption are defined as the proportion of adults who consume at least one fruit or vegetable per day, excluding juice and potatoes. Estimates for fruit and vegetable consumption are derived from national health surveys and are self-reported (with some differences in reporting periods, see country-specific notes in OECD.Stat on definitions, sources and methods for further details).

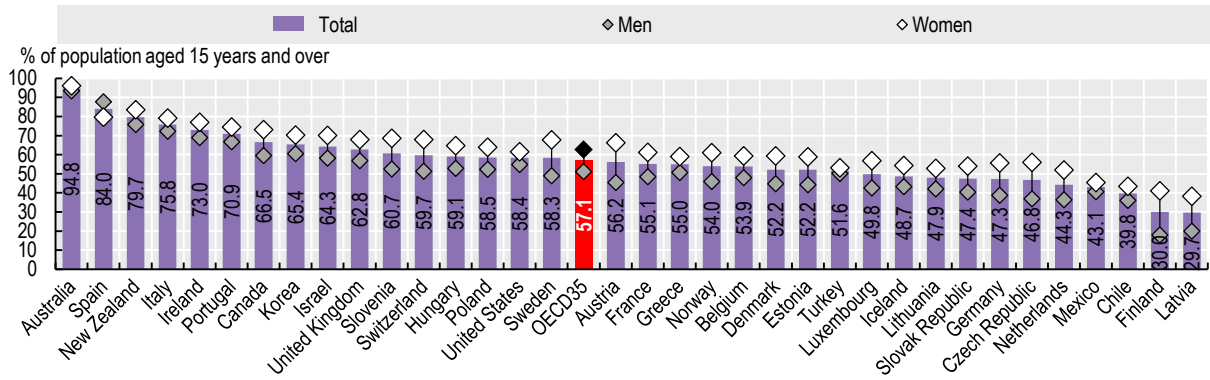
Data for Australia, Korea and New Zealand are derived from quantity-type questions. Values for these countries may therefore be overestimated. Most countries report data for the population aged 15 years and over, with some exceptions as highlighted in the data source of the OECD Health Statistics database.

The indicator of moderate physical activity is defined as completing at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week. Estimates of moderate physical activity are based on self-reports from the European Health Interview Survey 2014, combining work-related physical activity with leisure-time physical activity (bicycling for transportation and sport). Walking for transportation is not included.

#### References

- [1] Graf, S. and M. Cecchini (2017), "Diet, physical activity and sedentary behaviours: Analysis of trends, inequalities and clustering in selected OECD countries", *OECD Health Working Papers No. 100*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/54464f80-en>.
- [2] Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network (2018), *Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 (GBD 2017) Results*, Seattle, United States: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).
- [3] Warburton, D. and S. Bredin (2017), "Health benefits of physical activity", *Current Opinion in Cardiology*, Vol. 32/5, pp. 541-556, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/hco.0000000000000437>.

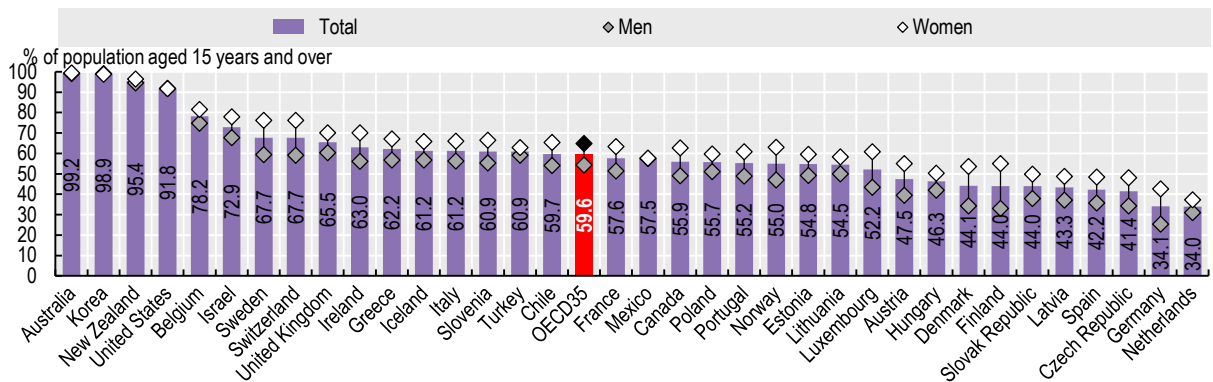
Figure 4.8. Daily fruit consumption among adults by sex, 2017 (or nearest year)



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2019.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934015410>

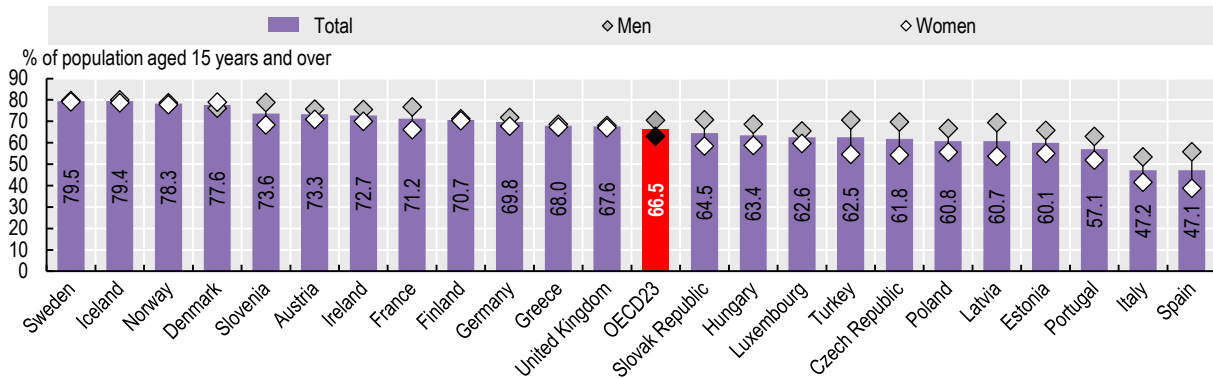
Figure 4.9. Daily vegetable consumption amongst adults by sex, 2017 (or nearest year)



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2019.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934015429>

Figure 4.10. Moderate weekly physical activity among adults by sex, 2014



Source: Eurostat EHIS 2014.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934015448>



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